



Staff photo/Susan Meeker

The eyes of the northstate were on Reverend Deborah Powell as she made history in Glenn County when she was sworn in as the first Youth Chaplain at Jane Hahn Juvenile Hall.

## New, first Chaplain sworn in at Juvenile Hall

By **SUSAN MEEKER**

*Staff Reporter*

Glenn County made history Saturday with the swearing in of the very first Juvenile Hall Youth Chaplain.

Reverend Deborah Powell, who is affiliated with the Promise Land World Outreach Center, will provide pastoral care, worship and educational opportunities to the youth committed to the Jane Hahn juvenile facility, located in Willows.

"Youth of today require the guiding hand of a loving, caring, and understanding person of faith," Powell said. "I want to show kids who are in trouble that their lives can be transformed, just the way mine was."

Powell's history in Glenn County dates back to when she,

too, was an offender.

"I was paroled from Ventura County in 1978, at the age of 18," Powell said. "Jane Hahn was my Probation Officer. If I can turn my life around, I know that these kids can turn their lives around."

Powell was sworn in as Glenn County Youth Chaplain by Don Bemis, a Siskiyou County pastor, in a ceremony at the juvenile facility on Saturday.

Jane Hahn, whom the facility is named, attended the ceremony. Other guests included her husband Steve, her parents, Manuel and Judy Spessard, of Gerber, and friends.

"I remember Deborah," said Hahn, who was Glenn County's Chief Probation Officer from 1963 to 1995. "She was incorrigible, but now she is great. So

many of the kids just need a few more years on them to turn their lives around. None are hopeless. You would be surprised how many people in the community were in trouble as kids."

Powell, who has also done ministry work in Africa, has been working with Glenn County's juvenile offenders for the past four years. The recently expanded facility currently has 19 inmates, ranging in age from 14 to 18.

"I'm not here to give them a religion, but a relationship," Powell said. "I've been incarcerated, so I know how many of these kids are feeling. They may have low self esteem. They may be rebellious. But, the real message is that you can't give up on

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them.”

Speaking to the juveniles who also attended the ceremony, Powell said, “All of you can overcome your current situation and become accomplished individuals. You can go back to the community that once branded you a convict, and hold your head high.”

One of inmates at the hall said Saturday that with Powell’s help, all the juveniles in the facility could make something of their lives.

“I’m grateful for Deborah for taking time from her busy life to help us,” he said. “She gives us hope.”

The position of Youth Chap-

lain is voluntary, and Powell will not be paid for her services by the county.

“My reward is working with the kids,” she said.

Powell’s duties will be to provide non-denomination spiritual mentoring to the youth of the facility, to connect the youth with clergy and other support networks from their own religious traditions and communities, and conduct worship services to those who wish to participate.

Interaction with the Youth Chaplain will be entirely voluntary by the juveniles at the facility.